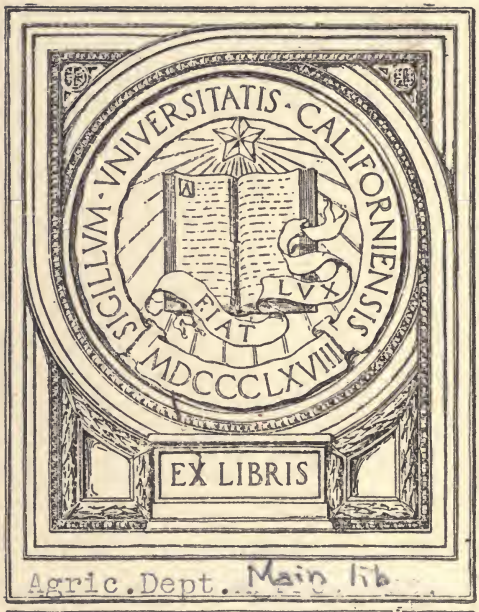
GETTING YOUR NAME IN PRINT

BY

H.S. McCAULEY



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Preface

This is the age of publicity, that mysterious yet visible force that is gradually changing the thoughts and habits of the world. Of the great discoveries during the past hundred years, publicity ranks easily with the motion picture, the telegraph, the airplane, or any other in its influence over the lives of men.

It is potent for tremendous good or evil. It can be used to delude a nation or to set a deluded nation right. By spreading truth it may turn light into dark corners where evils live. By spreading half-truths—or lies—it may cause the formation of incorrect opinions and consequent unwise action by many people.

It has done for commerce what machinery did for manufacture—multiplied the output or turnover—added to the world's wealth by stimulating markets and encouraging production.

Publicity may be used for offense or defense, and as every able-bodied man should know the principles of self-defense in order to "take care of himself" when attacked, so should business and professional people understand the elements of publicity for use when occasion demands.

This booklet is addressed to all who seek a better knowledge of the needs and purposes of the daily press, in order that they may cooperate with editors in having published information about themselves or their businesses.

It does not aim to train professional press-agents, but rather to outline for the layman who deals occasionally with the newspapers, broad principles of conduct and attitude that will promote mutual friendship and understanding—and profit.

Specifically, it was written with the expectation it would be of interest and help to doctors, lawyers, ministers, public officials, candidates, teachers, and persons in society.

A Few Generalities

(Read these over before you read the book. Then come back and read them over again. And as you begin to deal with newspapers and newspaper men read them over from time to time. Many a man has failed utterly in his attempts to co-operate with the press because he did not know these few simple rules.)

To get along with the press:

Don't try to reform the newspapers or the newspaper men. It can't be done. Take them as they are and play their game.

Give them whatever information they want, and let them handle it as they please.

Treat reporters as guests. See them ahead of other callers whenever possible. But don't fawn upon them.

"Tip off" editors occasionally on matters you think may interest them.

Play no favorites. Treat all papers alike.

Don't ever let an editor think you are trying to "use" his paper unworthily.

Ask the newspapers to print anything you want, but don't be angry if it isn't used. Try again and again, and you will succeed.

Don't depend on any single story or article to accomplish your purpose. Keep sending out story after story on the subject you are trying to advertise, whether it be yourself, your business, a membership drive, or whatnot.

GETTING YOUR NAME IN PRINT

1

What Newspapers Want

It would seem almost unnecessary to say that newspapers want news and are always glad to get it, no matter from what source. This statement, however, is made at the beginning because the writer during ten years' experience on a dozen different publications has found a considerable part of the public ignorant of this fact.

If you have any information regarding yourself, your business, your social affairs, or about someone else, which constitutes legitimate news, you will have little difficulty in getting it into the papers. They will gladly publish it free. In fact, they are forbidden by law to charge for the publication of anything

which is not set in advertisement style or which is not plainly marked with the familiar "adv."

In every community there are certain men, women, and institutions whom the local publications cultivate assiduously, for they have found them to be good sources of information. Some of these are public officials, others are private individuals or business houses. All of them, however, "stand in" with the press, and can count on its co-operation when they want it.

There is no better way to get into the good graces of newspapers than to let it be known you are always ready to help them in matters of news, to treat them squarely, and to be courteous and obliging to their representatives.

The writer knows two Chicago bankers whose rise from obscure clerkships is in great measure due to the fact they kept themselves in print constantly, thereby advertising the natural business ability they happened to possess.

They could always find a moment amidst the press of business to answer a reporter's ques-

tion. If the reporter displayed stupidity they were patient. Whenever they made speeches, the papers had advance copies. If they left town or returned, the papers were notified. If they presided at banquets or meetings, they saw to it that the reporters were enabled to get all the information they wanted quickly. They both developed excellent news judgment, and were able to so prepare their speeches and communications that editors gladly printed them. They not only gave out news when it happened, but they made news about themselves. And yet neither is an ordinary publicity seeker. Both are solid, substantial, shrewd business men.

What is news and what is not must be learned thoroughly by anyone who expects to deal with the press. He will then be able to inject into his talks and writings that which the reporters will seize on. He will be able to shape whatever he presents for publication in a manner

that will insure its use. In short, he will learn how to get into print.

News judgment is to be had only by experience—it cannot be acquired by reading alone—but much can be learned by considering a few principles here. Different newspapers have widely different standards by which they select what they shall and shall not print. For our purpose, it is sufficient to define *news* as any information which will interest a considerable portion of the readers of any given paper.

People in general are interested in (1) whatever affects their economic welfare, (2) whatever excites their curiosity, provokes their mirth, or spurs their envy, (3) whatever appeals to their sympathies or arouses their anger, all these terms being used in their broadest sense.

Nearly all news stories are written because there is that within them which affects readers in some of the foregoing ways, and the layman who wishes to get matter printed should

make certain his information has one or more of these elements in it.

Let us elaborate a little. People will be interested in whatever happens to someone they know. The President of the United States sprains his wrist and the entire nation is interested. The mayor of a city sprains his wrist and only his townsmen are interested. A leading minister or banker sprains his wrist, and fewer are interested, but still enough to get a brief paragraph. This is a good illustration of the old saying that the test of a news item is whether it will interest a sufficient number of readers.

This form of acquaintance-interest would extend to an inanimate object like a famous hotel, an old cathedral, a well-known statue, ship, river, or animal. If any of these were nationally or internationally known, any news concerning them vitally would be widely printed because it would be of wide interest.

Readers are also interested in whatever ap-

peals to their sense of humor, or causes astonishment. If a day-laborer sprained his wrist no newspaper would think it worth mention. But if he fell ten stories and sprained his wrist without other injury to himself, it would be well worth printing. Likewise, if he sprained his wrist while spanking his mother-in-law the accident would be lifted out of the commonplace and would undoubtedly receive wide attention.

The public is interested in whatever plays on its sympathies. Newspapers call this sort of news "human-interest stuff," and pay well for men who can write it appealingly. In this class come "sob" stories about homeless waifs, deserted wives at Christmas time, the passing of historic landmarks, or tragedy and sorrow of any kind. Information with these characteristics always gets in.

The press will generally refuse to print anything which the editors believe will arouse the anger of their readers. This includes indecent and overgruesome details, and religious or ra-

cial attacks. Probably every reader will be able to point to exceptions to this statement, but it is broadly true and will have to be heeded in dealing with many different newspapers.

The press will likewise refuse obstinately to print matter which the editors think is not worth printing. This frequently causes astonishment and anger among those who promote worthy causes which they think should be given the widest publicity merely because they are worthy. Such persons should bear in mind a matter is not of wide interest just because it is vital to one or two persons, or even to one or two hundred.

A new baby at the home of a mayor would be of vital interest to the mayor's family, and of milder interest to the city at large. A new baby at the home of a laborer would be of just as much vital interest to the immediate family, but the city at large would not be interested at all, unless the newcomer happened to have

six toes on each foot, or two heads, or other attributes of universal appeal.

This is why editors have to rebuff enthusiasts who rush in glowing with ardor and demanding the first column on page 1. These forget that the majority of the editors' clients—the public—care nothing for the project or news that is so vital to the enthusiast, and that the majority of papers are not in the business of giving their readers what they ought to have according to ethical principles, but merely what the editors think they want.

However, the most commonplace story can generally be so told by an experienced newswriter that it will be of wide appeal. If it has even a tincture of human interest he will bring it out. If prominent persons figure in it, he will "play them up." If tragedy or humor is there, he will present either forcefully. If the tale has none of these, he will sometimes stretch a point and supply them, for the sake of making a story.

The layman can learn to do all these things by a little observation and practise. Some laymen have this ability better developed than any but the best news-writers, and are highly successful at getting matter printed. They would work on newspapers themselves, were they not making better money in business.

One of the most widely circulated definitions of news is credited to a famous New York editor of a past generation and runs like this: "If a dog bites a man, that isn't news; but if a man bites a dog, that *is* news."

This definition is somewhat epigrammatic and does not tell the whole truth. It would depend on which man the dog bit, whether the incident were news or not. No matter which man bit the dog, however, that would be news.

Such a definition of news is likewise more true in the big cities than in the smaller. The metropolitan press has such a wealth of stories to select from that it uses only the most sensational. In smaller cities and towns the news-

papers have not so many thrills, and get into the habit of using much matter the big papers would scoff at.

Reduced to its elements, the above definition would be: "The commonplace is not news; but the startling and unusual is news." This is a safe test to use in determining if your material has wide interest. It will appeal to the public in just that degree that it departs from the commonplace.

News, however, is not the same to all papers. Some will devour what others would reject; their policies influence what they print. A newspaper's policy may be defined as the political, economic, social, or legal course it has mapped out for itself, and along which it tries to guide the opinions of its readers.

Some sheets are Democratic. It is idle to ask them to print anything praising a Republican administration, or anything reflecting unfavorably on the Democrats.

Some newspapers are Socialistic, or lean

toward union labor. They would not give much space to praise of bankers, nor to any news matter, however true, which showed a labor leader in a bad light.

Other newspapers are conservative; printed for the home circle. They "play down"—minimize—sex stories, divorce scandals, and all matter which the editors consider unfit for young people to see.

In carrying out the policy of his paper, the editor will generally violate or at least stretch the broad rules that define what a newspaper cannot safely print. Thus, a "yellow" journal striving for circulation will often publish scandal matter which many would consider bad reading. Various Pacific coast papers are outspokenly hostile toward the Japanese. Many southern dailies are equally hostile toward the Negro. A large string of metropolitan newspapers is violently antagonistic toward the British government. Certain religious periodicals make no effort to conceal their enmity

against sects or churches other than their own.

These papers consider their readers are in accord with their policies, and do not care whether others are or not.

A layman who deals with the same set of newspapers all the time should study their policies and whims. He should arrange the matter he submits so that it will offend none of them. If he can arrange it in direct line with any paper's policy, he can be certain of an extra cordial reception and much space from that sheet, at least.

In order to understand more fully what the editor wants, put yourself for a short time in his place. You are an editor. Whether you have an interest in the business or just a salary, your job depends on getting out a paper the people will buy. The better it sells, the bigger success you are. The less it sells, the nearer you go to the poorhouse. Whoever helps you to get news is your friend, and whoever hinders you, your enemy. To you news

is not just talk, something of ephemeral importance—as it is to most people—it is a valuable and necessary commodity. You MUST have it. Your bread depends on it.

Within the limits of your policy, anything you can do to make the paper sell better is legitimate. You have learned from experience, not by hearsay, that startling and unusual stories of divorce, scandal, crime, and all other sensation will thrill your readers and hold their patronage. You know that downright indecency will hurt your paper, but that it is possible to modify the bad stories so that they can be printed without being indecent, at the same time losing little spice. You know that with a few notable exceptions the newspapers which refuse to print anything unfit for the home circle are "dead ones." Your own living demands your paper be a "live one."

You do not try to fill your sheet exclusively with crime and scandal, for it would be dull from oversensation. You try to inject a goodly

leaven of current events, business, economics and humor. But always in the back of your mind is the thought that you MUST get the thrill, the story whose eight-column headline will make pedestrians pick out your paper on the street from others less gripping.

Whenever you hear of a good story, you send a reporter after it. You tell him to get it. His job and yours depend on it. When news is brought to your office you judge it in the light of your experience and with a stern impartiality. If it will sell the paper you print it, no matter whom it hurts. If it be uninteresting to the mass, you will not clutter your pages.

Unguided by written statutes, you try to be just. Human frailty sometimes hinders; the paper's policy, for which you are not responsible but which you must follow, sometimes prevents; but you always try.

As in other lines of business you help your friends and oppose your enemies. You have an especially warm nook in your heart for the

"good scout" who is always ready to do you a favor, to get your reporters into meetings, to see that they get a copy of the resolutions passed, to tell them what they want to know when other sources of information are closed, to "tip off" your paper when big news is about to break, etc.

Rarely does the "good scout" ask you a favor in vain. If the material he wants printed seems worthless as news, you say to a reporter: "Take this stuff Mr. Jones sent over and see if you can't dig a story out of it. If it's hopeless, call him up and get something on the matter we *can* print. He is a darn good friend of ours and we've got to oblige him." And you make this sort of comment many times a month.

Take off, then, reader, the editorial glasses you have worn briefly, and remember this:

If you are going to make friends with the papers and use them legitimately to your own advantage, you must do your share. You must learn what is news. You must put them

under obligation by sending whatever information comes to your attention that you think they would like. You must respond when editors and reporters ask about something you know. When you have to refuse them, you must do so courteously. When they press you unpleasantly, as their living often requires them to do, you must keep your temper. When they make mistakes, you must be patient and remember it is not humanly possible to turn out a considerable quantity of printed matter without errors in it. Do not large scientific works, compiled most painstakingly, contain pages marked "errata"?

You must heed the policy of the various papers, and not ask any as a favor to violate theirs. You must learn the limitations of the press, and not expect too much. You must put up cheerfully with all the inconveniences attendant upon success in the publicity field.

When you offer something for publication it is not necessary to get an introduction to any-

body. Merely write, call up, or go in person. Ask for the city editor. He is the man who passes on the news before it is printed. He is subordinate to the managing editor, but in well-regulated news shops he is the arbiter of local publicity, and the head of the paper defers to his judgment, or at least consults his opinions.

The city editor is always busy. Tell him in the fewest possible words who you are and what your story is about (not the whole story itself). He will listen to you briefly, decide on the spot if he wants it, and turn you over to a reporter or rewrite man who will take your facts and make them into a "yarn."

If you have written out your information in advance, the city editor will glance over it before giving it to the copyreaders to be prepared for the printers. If it needs rewriting, it will go to a rewrite man.

In dealing with the city editor never be didactic, overcritical or peremptory regarding the treatment your story is to receive. If you

say, "I want this printed exactly as I have written it, or not at all," or if you demand a position on the front page, or make any other unreasonable condition of publication, he will likely refuse to deal with you. You cannot tell any editor how his news shall be handled. He has many news stories besides yours to take care of, and must treat them according to their importance. Editors are all jealous of their authority in this respect. You will simply have to do your best and let the paper make any alterations it wants, so long as the actual meaning of what you have written is not changed. And you would do well to wink at minor errors of this sort, too, for rewrite men will make mistakes sometimes.

All this may not be to your liking, but you will have to bear it if you are to succeed. The highest salaried press-agents in the country follow this course, and they are experts at getting favors in the publicity line.

Neither is it customary to let any outsider

see what a reporter has written before it is printed. It is done sometimes, but it is a nuisance and proves unnecessary in most cases. The layman generally tries to edit the story according to his ideas, and ill feeling develops.

The most successful publicity getters just hand out their information broadcast, ask confidently for everything—without actually demanding it—and go into raptures of gratitude if they get anything. This is the only way. Be pleasantly persistent, confident, patient, and grateful.

Also, be speedy; be forehanded with your news. Editors are always dinning at their reporters: "Get the stuff in early, so that we can get it set up in plenty of time to catch our deadlines." You must be early, too, or your news may not be printed.

On morning newspapers the reporters start work from 1 to 2 p. m., though there is generally an assistant editor in the office as early as 10 a. m. They finish around 11 p. m.,

though some may get through as early as 10 p. m., while others are held until midnight or 1 a. m. of the next day. It depends on how their assignments turn out.

The city editor may be seen any time during the working day, except for three periods; when he is giving out assignments at 1 or 2 p. m., when he is turning over his assignment schedules to the "night man" around 5 or 5.30 p. m., and just before the final "deadline," somewhere about 1 a. m.

This does not mean big news could not be offered at these times, but that it would not be wise then to take up the city editor's time with a semi-press-agent effort. Wait until the tension is past.

On afternoon newspapers the force arrives early, about 6 or 7 a. m. A good time to offer news is around 9 o'clock, after assignments are all given out and the first edition has "gone in." There is usually a lull. Most afternoon papers fill their pages early in the day, and

will take nothing but highly important matter after 1 p. m., so it is useless to present ordinary stories as late as that. If you are anxious to get your information in all editions of an evening paper, a good plan is to offer it the previous afternoon, provided that you have it so far ahead.

The foregoing hints are not cast-iron rules. They may be violated successfully, and frequently are. If your news is big, offer it any time. If it is important enough, the paper will get out an extra. These few pointers are given only to help those who ask favors in the publicity line to make their requests under the most favorable conditions, when the customary interruptions and tension of the editorial office are least.

2

Newspaper Ethics

Newspaper policies have been mentioned, and a few words about newspaper ethics may be timely, since these are frequently misunderstood by the laity and form the basis of many disputes.

Do not smile at the assertion that newspapers have rigid ethics. The least reputable journal you know has ethics and lives up to them steadfastly; otherwise it is not a success.

For one thing, there is the widely observed rule that a newspaper shall never reveal a source of information. If editors told who "tipped them off" on stories, soon they would get no more tips.

Instances like the following show to what

lengths editors and reporters have gone to shield people who were good enough to give them important news:

(From the Chicago *Tribune*)

Judge Carpenter in the federal court yesterday entered an order finding Hector H. Elwell, city editor of the Chicago *Evening American,* guilty of contempt of court in refusing to answer questions put to him by a federal grand jury. The court fined the defendant $500 and ordered that he be confined in the county jail until he is willing to answer the questions. A stay order for ten days was entered upon request of Attorney R. D. Keehn for the defense.

"We consider the point involved so important to newspapers in general that we intend to carry this case to the highest court," Mr. Keehn said.

A special session of the grand jury has been called to question Mr. Elwell again. Shortly after two o'clock Mr. Elwell went before the grand jury for a short time. The proceedings before the grand jury were revealed later when James F. Geddes, foreman of the jury, went before Judge Carpenter and in a written statement *declared Mr. Elwell had again refused to reveal the source of the*

news story concerning grand jury proceedings against "Dr." William H. Sage, since indicted for accepting bribes.

The court action followed.

In this case someone had told the *Evening American* what the grand jury was doing, this act of course constituting a breach of trust, and possibly a violation of oath. The *American* was enabled to "scoop" its rivals, and the grand jury was highly concerned at the making public of its oath-bound proceedings, and acted at once to learn who had revealed them. Threats against the city editor were of no avail, and he was finally let off with payment of the fine, which was presumably made up to him by the paper.

Another rule universally observed by the press is that newspapers shall keep faithfully all promises made regarding the treatment of news. For this reason editors will generally refuse to make any definite promises of this kind! They know from experience a sudden

shift in events at the last moment could easily prevent their fulfilling even the simplest pledge as to how a story should be handled.

An editor might promise to print a certain story on his front page. A catastrophe might happen that, by reason of its overwhelming superiority in news interest, would crowd this story not only off the front page, but even out of the paper. An editor might also promise to use a photograph in connection with a story, but a last minute murder or wreck might require the exact space that the photo occupied and necessitate its removal. So editors generally promise these things conditionally, making it plain that the paper is not strongly bound.

Likewise, an editor seldom promises to hold out a story. He may wish personally to hold it out, and he may determine to hold it out if possible, but he knows from experience he may have to run it. If he promises not to use it, he may learn at the last moment his competitor is going to publish it. The owner of his own

paper may order him to do so. So that he is slow to bind himself to anything of this sort, and he always forbids his reporters to obligate their paper in any way.

Unless he has special instructions, no reporter is privileged to say: "Our paper won't print anything about this, but just give me the facts in confidence for our own information." Some unscrupulous scribes make a practise of this, however, and print the matter given them under pledge of secrecy. It is generally sufficient to complain to the managing editor to prevent a repetition. An editor will never let his men break faith. When a reporter promises secrecy it is well to call up his office and tell his employer so.

Promises made regarding the treatment of news, however, are so rigidly kept that one need never fear to reveal a coming event ahead of time with the understanding that nothing will be printed before a certain date. The Associated Press and other news services constantly

send out news ahead of time marked with "release dates." The President's messages to Congress are distributed beforehand thus, and large corporations send out annual reports and other important announcements in this manner. Such violations of trust as occur—and they are very few—are always accidental.

However, if an editor were pledged not to print a certain story before a given date, or if he had promised not to print it at all, and if he learned a rival paper had obtained the same information and intended using it at once, he would likely regard his obligation to the giver of the story ended, unless the competitor could be restrained in some way. This would be true also if another person came to him with the same story without attempting to impose secrecy upon him.

He would argue in these cases that the story had become public property, or soon would become so, and that pledges to secrecy were no longer binding. He would call it unjust that

he should be held to silence when another unpledged editor had the information with freedom to use it, or since by waiting he could have had it from another source without promising to keep it quiet. In these instances, however, the editor would be likely to tell his first news source of the circumstances and ask his permission to print the matter. No reasonable person would expect him to get badly scooped by keeping his original promise.

Another of the ethics of journalism is: "Print the news, no matter whom it hits." It cannot be denied that newspapers do on occasion hold out news at the behest of "interests." Newspaper apologists who gainsay this are denying what every active news-worker knows to be true. These "interests," however, are not necessarily financial interests—not necessarily rich men or advertisers. They may be political, religious, or economic groups. A radical paper that continually attacks "big business" and "Wall Street" may cower at the

threat of some union leader who can start a boycott against it. In college towns the local paper is frequently under the thumb of the college, its president, board of trustees or regents. Some papers openly dance whenever their small advertisers crack the whip, or when a powerful banker frowns at them; but it is incorrect to say that all papers do so.

These conditions are always the fault of the business office, not the editorial end. This latter department tries to print the news impartially, to praise the worthy, to strip the hypocritical, to expose fraud and combat evil. It proceeds with the investigation of all stories, regardless of the prominence or power of the persons involved, until called off by the general manager of the paper who usually has his ear close to the ground, and who is the person appealed to by "the interests," or to whom such appeals are referred when made to the subordinate officials. The "print the news" rule is lived up to by all editors to the extent permit-

ted by the business department. (Some business departments make a great show of independence, say they never interfere with the news end of the paper, etc., and after forcefully putting an advertiser in his place see to it he gets just what he wants.)

This "print the news" attitude, however, explains why it is so often useless to plead with an editor, "Why do you insist on dragging the mortifying details of my misfortune before the public? No good will come of it. You serve no purpose, accomplish nothing. You merely crucify me to give your readers a thrill and sell a few papers. Surely, with all the matter that comes to your office daily, you can afford to leave this story out and save me and my family such a terrible embarrassment."

As well ask a lawyer not to take a case against you! If you have no hold on the paper, and if you can offer no better reason than that printing the interesting story will be distasteful to you, in it goes.

Like most policies, this one has a utilitarian basis. Every paper is anxious to "beat," "trim," or "scoop" its rivals on important news, and it is really a blow to the prestige of a live publication to be badly left on a story it should have had.

It is likewise hurtful if the public suspects that a paper is controlled by big interests and wilfully suppresses news it should print. There is usually warfare between the business and editorial offices on just this point. For the public to say: "Young Jones got into an awful scrape and was arrested, and everybody in town knew it, but the *Star* didn't print a word because old man Jones is such a heavy advertiser," is bad for a paper's standing. This is another reason why they insist on handling objectionable matter. Publications like the Chicago *Tribune,* the Kansas City *Star,* the New York *World,* the Los Angeles *Times,* the Springfield *Republican,* all of which have been veritable mints for their owners, have made their success on the

basis of fearless handling of news. The advertising manager of a huge department store once went to the editorial office of the Chicago *Tribune* to "put a bug in the ear" of the editor concerning a series of shop-girl articles the paper was printing. Scenting what the caller was after, the then managing editor of the great paper kept him waiting three hours in an anteroom and finally sent out word he was too busy to see him. The articles continued.

There are vague rumors current among newspaper men that there exist somewhere certain papers that forbid their reporters to get news by underhanded or dishonest means. During his ten years' experience the writer has never encountered one such, nor has he heard the actual name of one. Reporters stop short of murder, and they generally hesitate at real crime, but little things like petty larceny (usually manifested in the stealing of photographs), misrepresenting themselves as officers, deception and fraud do not bother them.

In gathering news reporters have been known to (1) pick locks, (2) rifle trunks, (3) rob mail-boxes, (4) steal papers and letters from desks, (5) forge signatures, (6) commit housebreaking, (7) string dictagraphs, (8) commit kidnaping, (9) commit assault and battery, and (10) tap wires. Editors do not instruct their men to do these things, and generally they prefer not to know when they are done. They simply send the news-gatherers out with instructions to bring back the story.

It must not be thought from the foregoing that a reporter's existence is a round of sneak-thieving or thuggery. His ordinary day is no more exciting than that of other professional men. It is usually on the crime or scandal story that he steps outside propriety, and in most cases the end justifies the means. His entry into your office need not be a signal for a general scurry to cover unless there is big news afloat that you wish to keep silent.

The reader now knows broadly the ethical

principles by which most newspapers are governed. Here are a few principles he should bear in mind himself:

Never "double cross" a newspaper, or it will distrust you ever after, if it does not actually set out for reprisal. If a reporter confides in you he has certain information that he is going to print, do not call up a rival paper and tell of it.

If one publication asks you for certain information to make a news story, do not gratuitously give it to all other papers, too. Asking for it was the idea of the first paper, and it is entitled to the fruits of its enterprise in the shape of an exclusive story. However, should another sheet send to you for the same information, or had you planned previously to give it out to all the papers, it is a different matter.

Whenever you give information to an editor or reporter, make sure it is correct in all its details, or let the paper know the points of

which you are uncertain, so that it can check them up.

It would seem unnecessary to warn anyone against trying to make newspapers their unsuspecting accomplices in practical jokes. Yet people frequently seek to have printed accounts of weddings, elopements, engagements, parties, etc., which investigation proves to be false. These "tips" usually come anonymously by mail or phone, altho sometimes persons with little realization of the consequences induce friendly newspapers to publish such matter in good faith upon their bare word and without investigating. Of course the givers of the information can be held liable for damages in such cases, and the paper with them, altho the publication usually escapes if it shows that the printing was done without malicious intent. But it always puts the practical joker on its black list.

3

The Billy Sunday Plan

An effective method of dealing with the press is that employed by the evangelist Billy Sunday, and in some degree more or less by all persons whose livelihood depends on keeping in the public eye. Mr. Sunday makes hardly a move without notifying the newspapers. His publicity methods are well nigh perfect. When he is conducting revival services in a city all the daily publications are supplied in advance with complete copies of speeches and sermons. All that the reporters have to do then is to note any deviation from the printed copy, and watch for any disturbances or other events not on the usual program of a religious service.

One reason that Mr. Sunday gets so much

space is that he relieves the newspapers of nearly all effort in gathering news about him; his publicity organization does it for them. This is the real secret of keeping before the public with the aid of the press: Have something worth printing and make it easy for the newspapers to get.

Many people will say at once that they have no wish to acquire a reputation like Billy Sunday's and do not wish to follow his methods. These may rest assured they will not become known as second Billy Sundays unless their public performances are similar to his. The publicity methods he employs may be adapted to any business. Most corporations use them to some degree.

Before the war, the big ship lines mailed pictures of every new boat they launched to all the newspapers of consequence, together with well-written reading matter. The big rail lines also supplied plenty of interesting reading and pictures about themselves. All this was writ-

ten in good news style with the name of the sender mentioned only incidentally, and because it was skilfully prepared many editors were glad to print it, altho they knew it was nothing but free advertising.

Large construction companies supply the technical and trade press and sometimes the dailies with pictures and write-ups describing their biggest and most interesting jobs. The largest hotels in the country employ ex-newspaper men to see that their names are mentioned often enough to keep them before the public.

Colleges, expositions, political parties, actors, automobile manufacturers and a host of others all maintain publicity departments or individual press-agents whose duty it is to supply the newspaper and magazines with information about their employers, all dressed up and ready to print. Without any idea of personal vanity, they know it is good business to be

before the public often, and they go about it in a systematic manner.

Washington correspondents, whose dispatches go all over the United States, are bombarded with prepared publicity from a great many sources. In the spring of 1920, when propagandizing was going on with an intensity literally fierce at Washington, one busy correspondent reported that "news matter" from the following sources was sent regularly to his office:

Republican National Committee
Republican Publicity Association
Democratic National Committee
Chamber of Commerce of the United States
Committee of National Defense
Friends of Ukraine
U. S. Department of Agriculture
U. S. Public Health Service
Federal Trade Commission
Agricultural Campaign Fund
U. S. War Department
National Committee to Secure Rank for Nurses
National Geographic Society

National Association for the Protection of American Rights in Mexico
Senator Warren G. Harding
Friends of Irish Freedom
Governor Lowden Headquarters
American Fair Trade League
U. S. Department of State
National Woman's Trade Union League
Association of Railway Engineers
Office of the Surgeon General
Senator Poindexter

It will be seen at once that the efforts of "Senator Warren G. Harding" were not without benefits to himself, while it must be admitted also that Governor Lowden's publicity was not entirely fruitless, for he led the former Senator a fair race for the presidential nomination for a while.

While many of the press-agent stories, of which the above are fair samples, come from official government sources, it is generally understood among newspaper men at the capitol that they are not as free from self-interest as the uninitiated might assume. Practically every one of the "hand-outs" are sent by per-

sons with an ax to grind, whether they admit it or not, it is declared.

It is assumed that readers recognize the value of legitimate publicity. Surely it is no reproach to a public official that he desire to tell newspaper readers what he is doing to fulfil his obligations. Likewise, an aspirant to office can not be criticized for wanting to keep his name and picture before the public. A physician who performs an unusual cure or operation is committing no indiscretion in giving the press details that will be of interest to thousands. No woman would be censured for telling acquaintances about the party she had given. Is it any less dignified for her to tell more acquaintances by giving the account to the press?

Those who really have something worth reading will never get the reputation of seeking publicity, however often they are in print. They will become known as "live wires." This is

why you need never hesitate to notify the papers if you have a real story.

There is a growing tendency among newspapers to increase sharply the rigidity of news standards. Much purely "press-agent" matter that was formerly printed is now left out. At the same time publishers' trade papers like "The Fourth Estate." "Newspaperdom," "The Editor and Publisher," are campaigning against press-agents, declaring they are obtaining for nothing much space that they ought to pay for at advertising rates. Editors are continually urged by these campaigners to accept nothing that does not come through the regular news channels.

Shortly after the close of the European war growing scarcity of print paper forced most publications to cut their number of pages, and for the time being the campaign urged by these trade papers seemed to be making fair headway. When paper cheapened, however, the "free puff" and the gratis item of no news

value appeared again. Many newspaper men believe that they will eventually disappear for good. This, however, need not alarm anyone who hopes to keep himself before the public through the newspapers. He who has legitimate news will always get it printed. The press-agent matter against which the campaign is directed is the sort supplied by unskilful publicity men who rely for publication not so much on news interest as on the business prestige and advertising influence of their employers. This book aims to show readers how real news should be handled to insure publication, not how to keep their local papers full of matter not worth printing.

4

Sensationalism vs. News

The public has fallen into the error of branding as "yellow" any newspaper that "plays up" sensational stories with big headlines. It likewise errs in calling persons publicity seekers who let the press interview them and print their pictures often.

Among newspaper men only those papers are "yellow" that lie, distort the truth habitually, attempt to make news appear more important than it really is, or for some unscrupulous purpose try to make it less important. A "yellow" newspaper does not necessarily use big headlines. The newspaper which the writer considers yellowest, least scrupulous, and most salacious in the United States is nearly the most

conservative in appearance he has ever seen, and is read exclusively by staid people of high respectability who shun on principle the eight-column streamer and the pretty girl's ankle photograph.

Publicity seekers, too, are not those who allow reporters to quote them on important matters, or even those who for strictly business reasons wish to get their pictures or opinions printed. A publicity seeker is one who for reasons of vanity, and without real purpose, seeks to inject himself into print in order to strut among his friends as a basker in the limelight. Such people keep elaborate books of clippings about themselves and go over them again and again as a miser counts his money. Such reading tickles their self-esteem. Publicity seekers constantly pester editors to print something about them, it makes little difference what. The less skilful ones have been known to get themselves arrested in the hope of getting their names published. The more skilful and

wealthier go about organizing movements of one kind or another, which usually collapse shortly after they have received all the publicity editors are willing to give.

Fear of being branded as a publicity seeker has undoubtedly prevented many a man from taking advantage of his opportunities to use the press, and reporters often encounter worthy persons who obstinately refuse to give information on even the most trivial matters for fear their names will creep into print.

"We don't care for any cheap publicity," said the treasurer of a well known candy company in Chicago when asked for a forecast of the firm's annual report to go on the financial page of a morning paper. And this in spite of the fact the corporation spent thousands of dollars annually to popularize the name of its candies. Paid advertising was all right, but free news was "cheap publicity"!

Whatever your line of endeavor is, you can make your efforts better known to the public

through judicious use of the news columns, where you can often get for nothing mention that would cost hundreds of dollars if paid for in the advertising columns. You who refuse to talk to newspaper men to avoid "cheap publicity" are unfair to yourselves and your business. You are neglecting opportunity. No person has yet obtained prominence, wealth or power without drawing the fire of the envious, no matter how honest, upright or sincere he was. Become an able statesman and a certain percentage will call you a peanut politician. Build up an industry and the failures will say you are a ruthless exploiter. Resound as an orator and the disgruntled call you a "bunk artist." The only way to avoid all criticism is to remain obscure, to do nothing, to try nothing. Why worry, then, if you are called a "publicity seeker" when an interview appears under your photograph in the paper? As sensibly give attention to the scolding of squirrels or to the chatter of children.

Once persuaded it is entirely legitimate to make an effort to get into print, there remains the problem of just how to accomplish this. The reader has been told how to submit news when it occurs ready-made. It is now proposed to show a few legitimate methods of making news—not of faking it, but of planning and carrying out events in such manner the papers will want to print them. Persons who will not go to this trouble will not get the desired attention.

As the merchant puts his best goods in his show window, and as the editor puts his most interesting news on his front page, so must the speaker emphasize the sensational points of his talk and elaborate on them. The same holds true of a writer. Both should see to it that their talks or writings contain "sensation," if they want publication.

"Sensation" does not mean extravagant ballyhooing or extremity of statement. It means departure from the commonplace. It means

the "thrill" that every reporter looks for in a story, and which the public demands. "Sensation" means interest. Lack of it is boredom. In striving for "sensation," however, guard against overdoing it. To make wild statements is easy; every soap-box orator on the street corner does it. One can not get into print merely by ranting aimlessly. There must be something definite to rant about, and it must be done logically.

Suppose you are to make a speech, deliver a sermon, or write an article. Having chosen your subject, stop and wrack your brain for something to say on the topic you think will surprise or startle your hearers, something they have never heard before. It is not enough to make your audience laugh—your startling point must carry information.

Select two or three such statements and elaborate on them. Make them into sections of your talk or article. If your startling statements are true and you have proof, never mind

how extravagant they sound, but bear in mind that the wilder they seem the greater is the necessity of offering proof in order not to be set down as unreliable. This is one of the secrets of a strong, convincing talk: to give proof. An address with one or two convincing sensational statements is more likely to get printed than one with many exaggerated and astounding assertions for which no proof is offered.

As a painter eliminates the unnecessary details of a landscape from his picture, eliminate from your matter all that does not bear on your subject. Above all, do not repeat yourself.

All the world loves a controversy, and if there is opportunity for such in your remarks, be sure to inject it. But if you attack anybody or anything, be specific in your charges and your explanatory statements. Again—offer proof. Merely calling names will weaken your talk for purposes of publication.

If you are to discourse on a dry subject, connect it in some manner with the every-day life of the people. This will give it wide interest.

A talk on the necessity of extending the right of eminent domain to gas companies would not appear promising to most editors. But if the speaker declared forcefully that such extension would greatly lower the price of gas, or would triple it, the editor would be interested. The right of eminent domain would be closely linked with a matter vital to everyone.

A reporter assigned to a mining engineers' convention in Chicago was nearly suffocated with the boredom of an interminable paper on coal, until the reader remarked, apparently as an afterthought, that a certain process of mining was destined to cut costs in half. A front page story resulted, because the reporter was able to see what the engineer had buried; that coal cost was vital not only to the mine-owner,

but to every manufacturer and home-owner in the land.

Whether you are a preacher, a banker, a teacher, a milliner, a horseshoer, or a newsboy, and are talking on a trade topic, you can bring the cost of living or some other matter of wide appeal to your speech and make it of universal interest.

It is well to consider also the lending of news interest to functions of various sorts, whether they be lawn parties, banquets, ship launchings, church socials, dances or whatnot.

Here, too, the public will be interested just to that extent the information given departs from the commonplace. If you want a function written up well, stage it so there is something unusual to write about. Put thought and time to your program. Try to make it different from other programs. Study the stories that appear in print about similar functions and try to arrange features with as strong news appeal, but different.

It would be useless to attempt suggesting unusual features for even a small part of the various affairs held continually, but the idea it is hoped to convey may be gained from the following examples:

A new Chicago bank about to open for business notified the papers that on the opening day at 11 a. m. J. Ogden Armour would be present to start a $50,000 account. Mr. Armour came, as did photographers, and he was flashlighted, check in hand, at the receiving teller's window.

A manufacturers' association was enjoying its annual banquet when a wild-eyed bewhiskered anarchist in a long coat and ancient slouch-hat entered and began to berate the diners with threatening gestures. After striding back and forth through the dress-suited throng he sat down at a piano, sang, "I Want What I Want When I Want It," and pulled off his whiskers and coat, revealing himself as a member of the organization.

A colonel at a midwestern camp during the

War desired publicity for his regiment in order to strengthen its morale, so he issued a startling set of orders requiring each man to wash his ears and feet carefully, declaring only clean soldiers could defeat the Hun. The press seized on this and sent it broadcast. The colonel then found an aged Indian fighter who taught the regiment the old Blackhawk war cry with which to terrorize the Germans. This went broadcast, too. Next he rigged up targets in shape of German soldiers running away, the news of which was "eaten up" by the papers. Lack of space forbids a catalog of his stunts, but he got so much publicity that he incurred the jealousy of most other colonels of the camp. There was always something doing in his regimental area, always something to write about.

The program manager of a church social hired a singer from an extremely gaudy cabaret to entertain. He thoughtfully gave her a contract for the evening. A few staid church trus-

tees learned of it and made a terrific fuss which got into the papers and ran for a week. After the singer threatened to sue for the amount of her contract, it was decided to use her services after all. On the night of the social the street in front of the church was jammed with people who could not get in. High profits resulted.

A minister whose Sunday attendance had been falling off got out handbills purporting to be issued by "Lord and Company" bearing a cut of several angels, with an announcement of the benefits of churchgoing. He was severely criticized, but filled his church. This divine would undoubtedly have gotten more newspaper space in the long run had he announced the beginning of a vice crusade with startling revelations.

The writer does not urge his readers to adopt any of the foregoing schemes in their work of getting publicity for whatever events they wish written up. Some will consider these schemes of doubtful taste. Those to whom they appeal

may be assured that they were highly successful in the instances cited. It is incidents of the kind mentioned that serve to attract newspaper attention, and those who decry such publicity must be content to jog along without notice, like the store that does not advertise.

If you are going to do anything at all, why not do it in an attention-drawing way? Study the papers. Every time you see a good write-up or interview try to determine what feature makes it worth printing. The story that gets the most space is usually the most interesting and acceptable for publication. A short study course of this sort will develop your news sense remarkably.

5

How to Treat Reporters

The reporter is the newspaper representative with whom the outsider comes oftenest in contact. He is a sharp-witted chap, quick to detect shams, contemptuous of pretense, an expert at ridicule, unawed by "great men," and persistent as a book-agent. Sometimes he is an expert news-gatherer without much writing ability; sometimes he writes well and is only fair as a newsgatherer. Nearly always he is a Bohemian sort of person, disdainful of conventions, without much commercial sense, somewhat temperamental, more of an artist than a business man.

The reporter has no deciding voice in what his paper shall print or leave out. He takes assignments from the city editor without ques-

tion and covers them to the best of his ability, whether he likes them or not.

He is more or less of a slave, yet he is sometimes able to manipulate news stories surprisingly to the advantage or disadvantage of the chief characters. By failing to report information he stumbles across he is able to suppress incidents unfavorable to his friends. By reporting the same sort of information he is frequently able to highly embarrass those who have gained his enmity, even though his editor does not specifically assign him to "go after" them.

One who hopes to keep on friendly terms with the press must earn the goodwill of reporters and hold it. To do this he need not fawn upon them, he need not bribe them with presents and dinners. He need only treat them squarely.

Men of the publicity-seeking type frequently try to buy reporters with loans, cigars, neckties, shirts, hats, etc., and sometimes even gifts

of money. They expect these newspaper almoners will repay by either getting something in or keeping something out for them. They are mistaken. A real reporter would rather have a good story than a gift any time. If the story is good it will get printed without the gift. If it is poor, the gift won't get it printed. Conversely, a reporter can't keep a story out of print once the city editor learns of it, and any suspicion that he is trying to do so will result in a thorough investigation. News value is what counts.

These bribing publicity seekers attract a horde of discredited, out-of-work incompetents, but seldom succeed in getting a real reporter to accept their petty graft.

The writer once heard a semi-successful lawyer explaining with ludicrous pomposity to a fellow barrister how "as a cold business proposition" he had just "loaned" a newspaper reporter two dollars without expectation of return. Inquiry revealed that the reporter in ques-

tion had been connected with no newspaper for more than a year, having been fired successively from every publication in town for slacking, padding his expense accounts, and using his connection with the press basely. This is the sort of reporter that cadges for free tickets, hats, cigars and two-dollar "loans." The real ones do not.

Crooked ex-newspaper men are known as "we-boys." They go about soliciting donations for press clubs, benefit funds and similar causes which are usually found to be non-existent when investigated. The "we-boy" is so called because the first man who worked this graft is supposed to have told his victims what "we-boys" would do for him if he would only donate.

As has been said, there is no reason to fawn upon reporters, but it is well to remember they are the representatives of powerful institutions. When you talk to a reporter you are talking to his paper, not to him individually. Never

treat a reporter like a servant or messenger boy. If your banquet or reception is being written up, give the press men a table. Make guests of them. The reporters may not come. They may try to cover the affair on the phone. Or they may leave their special table vacant all evening and arrive only at the last minute. But no matter, they will need a place to write if they do come. Though they appear in unpressed clothing, which some are apt to do after a hard day's work, any attempt to look down on them will be spotted at once and resented effectively. Reporters for the most part are well-educated and well-bred, but the nature of their work prevents scrupulous observance of the formalities. Nevertheless, they will not be patronized or treated condescendingly. Many a snob has learned this to his sorrow, for no elephant has a longer memory for injuries than a scribe.

It often happens that news-gatherers are sent to interview on delicate and embarrassing matters. The reporter is generally as embarrassed

as the victim, yet he must ask the questions somehow and either get the information or a refusal to discuss the topic.

Don't imagine that you can dispose of a good reporter by waving him away with "I don't care to discuss that. I have nothing at all to say. Good day, sir." He will keep right on asking questions until he has convinced himself there is nothing to be had from you. Then he will seek your business associates, your family, your friends, your attorney, your enemies, your neighbors, and anybody else who could be expected to know anything at all about the matter, or nothing at all about it. And somewhere in his search he will find a person who will talk. It rarely fails.

When a reporter persists in questioning you, don't get angry. Skilful interviewers often try to excite their subjects, because that makes them talk, and when they talk they are certain to let drop something that at least furnishes a clue.

If you don't care to talk, say so firmly and

tell why. Then adopt a sphinxlike attitude and let the reporter wear himself out. You may note with pleasure the rising inflections of despair in his voice as question after question goes unanswered. No man is harder to interview than the pleasant fellow who repeats to each query, "Now, young man, I really am not going to say a thing about that," or "All that is confidential. It would be a breach of trust for me to tell you." If you are only courteous to news-gatherers you can turn them down as much as you like without creating ill feeling. Though they are driven to persistency, they appreciate your position, and you should appreciate theirs.

Some men refuse to see reporters when there is unpleasant matter in the wind. Stories are not kept out of print that way, however, because the paper always has a little information to go on, and a refusal to see the reporter only redoubles his energy. He will waylay you in the hall, in the lobby, on the street, at your

home, at church, at your club. He will call you over the phone after midnight. He will canvass your friends and enemies and gather a hodge-podge of truth and error. He will dog you and pester you until he gets enough to make into a regular story, or "runs the yarn down to nothing." You will save time by seeing him in the first place.

In deciding whether to be interviewed, however, it is well to determine if you would not rather be dogged than subjected to a cross-questioning. There are times when a mere refusal to answer a question is as good as an admission of guilt, and if you cannot afford to have damaging queries put it is far better to hide out somewhere.

When a reporter calls on you, see him as soon as you can. He will be in a greater hurry than ninety per cent of your other callers, and in many instances you can tell him what he wants to know in a minute and get rid of him. Secretaries of many prominent men have stand-

ing orders to admit news-gatherers ahead of everyone else.

Never berate a reporter for the faults of his paper, or its policy. He can not help either. However, if you have a legitimate complaint to make about his own conduct carry it to his managing editor. While persistency and nerve are required of news-gatherers, boorishness and insulting conduct are not tolerated. Do not take advantage of the occasion to give the editor a piece of your mind, but merely state your complaint. No editor wants his paper represented by "roughnecks" who kill more news than they gather, and you may be sure the offender will hear from those higher up, altho, as hinted previously, overzealousness alone will not be regarded as a serious offense. In any event, do not blame the paper for the personal faults of its reporters.

A banker who was badly misquoted by a careless scribe decided to get a retraction from the paper. Altho in his own business he was

counted a shrewd man, he set after it as follows:

Editor *Evening Star,*
DEAR SIR:

I should think a paper like yours would be ashamed to print such a slanderous lie as you carried about me in yesterday's late edition. However, as I know newspapers have little regard for the truth perhaps I should not be surprized at it. One of your paid liars came to my office and tried to interview me about the effect of the North Dakota Non-partisan League's action on the banking business of that State. As I know nothing about the matter I refused to discuss it with him and thought the affair was ended, but I was astonished to see that you had printed the attached article in your newspaper with your customary disregard of facts. Altho I am possibly over-confident in expecting justice at your hands, if you call yourself a real man the least you can do is to make me a public apology on your front page and retract this infamous fabrication.

Yours truly,
FRANK KENNEDY

The banker's anger was justified, but what is there about such a letter to induce an editor

to rectify his paper's mistake? Would he not feel antagonistic and trump up every possible reason to excuse his reporter's carelessness? This letter would not be given room here, except it is a fair sample of a class received by editors daily. Needless to say, the epistle failed of its purpose, and the banker is doubly convinced the press habitually prints falsehoods about reputable citizens, merely to fill space.

When you are very particular about having yourself quoted correctly, it is well to issue a typewritten statement. If this is twisted and garbled, you have excellent grounds for complaint, and if it is maltreated so as to make trouble for you, there is good ground for action against the offending paper.

6

Misquotations

The alleged inability of American newspapers to "get anything right" has become a byword. The writer admits that newspapers as a whole are inclined to be careless about minor details, but rises to defend them from a blanket charge of habitual inaccuracy.

Mistakes in the press are due almost wholly to the speed with which news is gathered, edited and printed. Newspapers in other countries are more accurate because they do not print so many editions a day, and because there is not the same rivalry to "beat the other sheet to the street" with the news.

A reporter who is in a hurry works fast, and fast work of any kind is apt to be slipshod in details; addresses are incorrect, initials wrong,

names misspelled, etc. Another source of error is the American habit of going after a story hammer and tongs, especially hard stories in which the principal characters try frantically to cover up information. The reporters interview the chief characters, or try to. Then they go to relatives, then to neighbors, and to anyone else they think may know anything at all about the matter. The result is a crazy quilt. It must be so because no two persons will give the same account of any event. When five or six different accounts are welded into one the result is astonishing.

Therefore, if you want a matter presented correctly in print, give it out yourself, taking plenty of time to make sure the reporter gets his notes accurately and is given a chance to ask questions about anything he does not understand.

If you are approached on a subject that you do not care to have printed, reflect that the newspapers will send men to other sources of

information if you refuse to talk. Some of these sources may be hostile to you and will purposely give out inaccuracies to disconcert you.

Misquotation is another fault with which the American press is charged—mostly without cause. Many speakers complain that their statements are warped by the press; that the words included within the quotation marks and attributed to them are not the words they actually uttered.

In nearly every case it will be found that while this complaint is literally true, the meaning of the words within the quotation marks on the printed page is identical with the meaning of the words the speaker uttered on the platform, altho their order is disarranged.

It would be impossible to record in a newspaper every word of even the shortest speeches. The most concise orator uses far more words than are necessary to convey his ideas clearly. The spoken idea must be embellished and

adorned with explanation and repetition in order to make a lasting impression on the hearer, while the idea printed in a few words can be read and reread. Newspapers in this country therefore consider it legitimate to boil down the utterances of a speaker and to put them in quotation marks as tho they were giving his exact words. In Great Britain the same thing is accomplished by indirect quotation, while direct quotations are apt to be the verbatim words of the speaker taken in shorthand. The British method is of course the more accurate, but not as interesting and entertaining as the American way.

Therefore, in your relations with the press, you should make no complaint over what a reporter does to your statements, unless he actually makes you express an idea that you did not express. Rearrangement of words or thoughts, so long as the sense of the idea is not changed, is considered entirely permissible, and protests against it will usually go unheeded.

Distasteful to many, but a condition to be reckoned with. Only speakers of the greatest importance can expect the flattery of a verbatim shorthand report.

7

Keeping Matter Out of Print

Before ever you ask a newspaper to withhold information about you, consider that its life depends on printing the news. Also ask yourself whether publication of the information would do you any real harm.

If you are unfortunate enough to figure in a scandal, publication might be very unpleasant, but probably would not damage your business. The writer well remembers the agonized voice of a western dentist pleading with him not to print a particularly salacious scandal in which the tooth-puller had become embroiled. He threatened to shoot himself, declaring his practise would be ruined. Nevertheless, a hard-hearted city editor decided on publication and

within three months the dentist had so much business he hired an assistant.

Similarly, the mayor of a small Pacific Coast city was named as the paramour of a society woman in a signed confession which she wrote in a fit of despondency. Political enemies of the official got it and made it public on the eve of election, expecting to force his withdrawal. He made the race and was re-elected by a landslide vote.

Because of instances like these newspapers are loath to heed the pleas that "publication of this will ruin me." They are equally slow to heed the other chestnut about "this will kill my mother if you print it. She has no idea I'm in this fix." Businesses are rarely ruined unless the scandal involves the business itself, while aged and invalid mothers seem particularly immune from the shocks produced by eight-column scareheads. You will need excuses better than these.

Ordinarily, it is useless to ask a paper to sup-

press a good story, no matter how friendly it feels toward you. The editor will argue truthfully that his rivals have it, and he must not be scooped. If he knows his rivals haven't it, he will say he dare not miss such an opportunity to scoop them. If his is the only paper in town he will say everybody knows the story and he must mention it to save his reputation for fearlessness. No matter what your argument, he will find an answer to it, because his business is to print news.

So long as you deal only with the editorial department, the most you can expect will be a "playing down" of unpleasant matter. You won't get it held out, but if you have obliged the editor and his reporters occasionally, they will be glad to soften the story for you.

But, if you deal with the business office, or have a hold on it, you can sometimes get better results.

If you know the paper's owner, you may persuade him to order the story held out. On

some poorly conducted papers the fact that you are a friend of the owner's may frighten the editor into doing this. On well-regulated sheets, however, any threat by you mentioning your acquaintance with the "big boss" would likely put your story on the front page.

If you are an advertiser, or are willing to become one, an appeal to the business manager might get what you want—and it might not. The writer has seen it work both ways. It is almost useless, however, to talk about the advertising you are doing or intend to do to anyone in the editorial department. Some papers are servile toward their patrons, while others are absolutely independent and are never so happy as when showing a big advertiser "where to head in at." However, if you are dealing with a servile paper, this advertising influence can sometimes be carried to great lengths. A man who was anxious to have an escapade kept out of print appealed to a friend who was advertising manager of a large furniture house

that bought much space. The friend phoned the city editor and made his appeal, but was told that nothing could be done. In a half-hour the business manager of the paper called the city editor on the phone and made the appeal himself, saying a fair sized advertising contract depended on it. This had a magic effect.

If you know that a paper intends to print something untrue about you, it is sometimes effective to threaten a libel suit. A hired editor is not anxious to gain a reputation for getting his paper into litigation. Do not be silly enough, though, to deny something that is true, and threaten suit if it is printed. You might delay publication for a day or so, but the subsequent cloudburst of publicity would about sweep you away. An editor who has been thoroughly fooled once carries an ax ever after for the man who took him in. Remember that newspapers have a legal right to

print anything that is true, unless it can be proven they do so for a malicious purpose.

It is practically useless to appeal to politicians, ministers, bankers or other merely prominent persons for aid in holding out a story. Generally they have no direct hold on the paper and can do no more than yourself.

Next to a big advertising contract, the personal friendship—not the mere acquaintance—of an official of the editorial department is about the best asset for the man who seeks obscurity. It is not hard for an independent paper to ignore a plea based on a threat to withdraw advertising, but it is very hard for an editor to say "no" to a real friend to whom he is indebted.

All of the foregoing has been written with respect to really important stories which it is wished to have omitted. Aside from these, however, which occur but seldom in the life of any individual, there are numberless little items of less weight which you may want silenced.

These are quite interesting enough to be used, but not so vital that they must be printed even though the heavens fall. Here is where your favors to the paper will profit you, for often an explanation of just why you want the little story killed will induce the editor to say nothing of it, even if his rival does use it.

He who wishes to use the press to his own advantage would best not spend too much energy on keeping matter out of print. It is uncertain and arduous work. He should concentrate on getting enough favorable publicity to offset any undesirable news that creeps in.

A Pennsylvania summer resort proprietor once offered the editor of a Pittsburgh paper $1 for every time his hotel's name was mentioned in his news columns, no matter what the connection.

There is a well known Illinois politician who has repeatedly told reporters, "Boys, I don't care what you say about me in your papers, but for heaven's sake say *something!*" This

hotel-keeper and this politician have the right idea. Like P. T. Barnum they know one whose business depends on publicity would better take a roasting in print than be ignored altogether. Publicity which at first would seem highly damaging does not always hurt. The mere mention of one's name is worth something.

8

Meeting Opposition

To meet the opposition of a newspaper and come off smiling is very hard. Yet it is a necessary ability for one who expects to succeed in public life. Politicians, ministers, public officials, reformers and all who advocate or oppose civic and political measures encounter the hindrance of the press some time or other.

To these just one resolution is urged: "Don't ever let a newspaper goad you into a display of anger." An angry man is an excellent target. No matter how you are abused editorially, how your motives and actions are misconstrued, how your words are garbled, don't allow your resentment to provoke you into a caustic letter to the editor or into "bawling out" a re-

porter. If you can not endure unfair opposition, your success will be limited. He who hits back every time a newspaper steps on his toes will find all his time taken with combat, and none left for advancement.

If you are actually libeled, dignified legal recourse may be had, but one who habitually files suit against every paper that criticizes or misquotes him soon gains a reputation in court as a trouble hunter, and finds his legal efforts wasted.

Senator Smoot of Utah is said to pay no attention whatever to newspaper criticism of his public acts. Senator James Hamilton Lewis of Illinois greets all reporters courteously, regardless of their mission or the paper they serve. He likewise never censures a paper for censuring him. By his uniform urbanity he has won the friendship of hundreds of reporters and the respect of many editors, who extend to him all the favors they can, no matter what the policies of their papers may be.

It is often hard to convince a newly elected official that when an editor criticizes him severely he should not retaliate by cutting off all news. The chief reason he should not try this is that he is bound to fail. The lengths to which newspapers will go to get information, and the unexpected sources from which they draw it are astounding.

Opposition of this kind only adds zest to their daily grind and sets them harder to work. It challenges their reportorial pride and always results in a flood of undesirable publicity. You should make a hard and fast rule to treat all newspapers alike, those that support you and those that oppose you. Of course the friendly ones may be rewarded with exclusive tips occasionally, but the hostile ones should never be refused information if they ask for it. By fairness you may win them to you. By getting angry you are certain to make yourself a laughing stock.

The police chief of a western city once for-

bade reporters access to any part of the station except one office. He aimed at a paper that had been roasting him, and thought to prevent it from getting any police news, since its men could no longer talk to captains at their desks, patrolmen off beat, turnkeys, or prisoners in their cells.

The result was an avalanche of publicity that cost the chief his job. He admitted afterwards he had no idea his administration had so many weak points around which exposés could be built. He has not learned yet how the papers managed to get all the news in spite of his efforts. Had he kept his temper he could doubtless have settled his differences with the hostile paper and retained his place.

There have been but few cases where a public official succeeded against opposition from the newspapers—without the support of at least one. Usually an official must keep on the good side of the press to hold his job.

9

Photographs

Every person who becomes prominent is asked some time or other for his picture for reproduction. It is best to give it cheerfully, even if one has no particular wish to appear in print, for editors set considerable value on the pictures of well-known people, and sometimes go to extreme lengths to get them. Staff photographers are assigned to lie in wait and snap the coy person who will not pose, and "picture chasers" have been known to wheedle, bribe or steal photos from servants and children in the absence of the owner. The silly attitude of false modesty maintained by some men, who for no good reason at all refuse to favor the press with likenesses, is especially aggravating to editors and rarely fails to result in an

attempt to "kidnap" a picture of the recalcitrant.

Of course anyone who is really trying to "get on" with the press can not take this stand, and it is a foolish position for any man unless he has a hidden criminal record. It is well for everyone who attains prominence to have a supply of pictures on hand especially to give out to the papers. Whenever a new photo is taken, copies may be sent around to all the editors in town for filing in the office "morgues." If one is diffident about presenting one's photo without any particular excuse a close friend may be pressed into service, who can carry it in with the explanation he thought the editor might like a recent picture of the sender.

Persons who alter their sartorial appearance radically should not fail to be taken in their latest garb or style. This will save smooth-shaven men from being pictured in print with the mustaches or beards they wore fifteen years

ago, and will save women the mortification of being shown with pompadours and trailing gowns in a day of bobbed hair and short skirts.

Where the newspapers are too small to make their own half-tones from photos it is well to have a few one-column cuts made in a nearby city and distributed. Publications that do make their own cuts never charge for them unless the subject desires the cut for his own use. The larger papers frequently give these away free. The smaller newspapers, however, sometimes want pay for having a cut made, if it is necessary to send away for it.

If one has a photo taken especially for the press, it should be on glazed paper and should have what photographers call "contrast," as these prints make the best cuts. It should have the name and address of the subject written on the back. If it is desired to use a typewriter for this, write on a piece of thin paper and paste on the picture. This is to avoid punching through the brittle paper with the type-

writer keys. If there is more than one person in the picture the names of all should appear on the back, reading from left to right. This is important, because serious and mortifying errors have occurred where photos were improperly identified. It will not do to say "everybody knows me, no chance to confuse me with someone else." The dailies employ many transient workers who know little and care nothing about local celebrities and who will mix pictures if given a chance.

Newspapers expect to keep all pictures given them unless return is agreed upon, so if you want a borrowed photo brought back be sure to write on the reverse side "Return immediately to ———." Photo-engravers insist on removing the glass from the front of a framed picture before photographing it to make a cut, so when one is loaning a valued likeness it is well to do this oneself and avoid accidents. It is common also to retouch a photograph in the art room so that it will copy better. This con-

sists of painting out unnecessary parts of the background, emphasizing details of importance such as the lips, eyes, ears, parts of the clothing, etc. This is done with white and slate colored washes that dry into a chalky paste and may be easily removed with a damp cloth. So that if a photo comes back all painted up there is no cause for excitement. The injury is not permanent.

Black and white prints copy easiest, sepias less easily, while blue prints are so hard to copy some papers refuse to consider them.

In the case of valuable or treasured pictures it is wise to insist on having a staff photographer come to the house and do the copying, or to have it done at a nearby studio and give a print to the paper. The press as a whole is careful in the handling of photos, but they go through so many hands mishaps may happen in spite of all precautions. The writer once spent an hour assuring a Gold Star mother of his paper's clean record in returning pictures,

only to have it lose the only photo she had of her son who had been killed in France. The distracted woman finally went to New York from Chicago to get another one, which she obtained by searching through countless unidentified group pictures of soldiers until she found a likeness of her dead boy in one.

10

Writing Information

At least two years are required to make a good writer of the average reporter, so much must not be expected from a book of this length. There are no rules for the writing of news stories, but there are several broad principles which can be studied with profit.

In the first place, brevity is insisted on. Most newspaper stories tell in a few hundred words what a novel takes several hundred pages to set forth. Don't bring in any literary flourishes. They fill too much space and will be ruthlessly pruned.

Only facts may be stated. Opinions of the writer regarding those facts are not permitted, and will be taken out if written in. Don't say: "John Jones, *the most progressive dry goods*

dealer of Smithboro, is building a *beautiful* two story addition to his *already superb* emporium. *Mr. Jones deserves great praise for his enterprise.* etc., etc.,"

The words in italics would be cut out of copy sent to the city editor of any up-to-date paper, altho some country sheets allow this sort of thing. Matter like the foregoing is said by newspaper men to be written in "editorial style," which is generally not permitted. Matter without such embellishments of opinion is said to be in "news style." Editorial style in well-managed papers is confined to the editorial columns, where the paper's opinions are expressed. The news columns, however, are supposed to contain nothing but cold fact, unless the paper grants someone the privilege of expressing his opinions in a signed article, which is printed under the name of the writer, to partially absolve the paper from responsibility.

The writings of most laymen are hopelessly

editorial and have to be rewritten, as it is generally impossible to prune out the editorial matter and leave the rest making sense. Be careful, then, to avoid this style.

None of the foregoing, however, applies to matter written for the society columns. If you are contributing a society item, you may spread your wings of fancy and soar as high as you please.

Paragraphs should be short and sentences likewise, because the narrow width of newspaper columns makes it hard to read long unbroken stretches of print.

Newspapermen call the first paragraph of their stories the "lead" (pronounced *leed*), and within the lead and the paragraph immediately following they are required to express the central idea around which the story is built.

This is done in order that a busy man who has time to read only the very first part of a story can learn what it is about. A general practise is to express the main idea in the first

two paragraphs and then start all over again and tell the story in detail. Writers of feature stories do not follow this rule, but the lay contributor to a newspaper is not expected to write features.

When your story contains names, addresses, and any matter of a statistical nature make certain it is absolutely correct, or state plainly that there is some doubt about it. Do not in any case make the paper believe it is correct if you are not sure of it.

Names are especially bothersome. There are two or three ways to spell "Riley," so be sure you spell it correctly, or Mr. Riley will blame the paper for the mistake and you will gain a reputation for inaccuracy. It is customary to print the first name or initial of every person mentioned in a news story, so you will save some reporter lots of trouble by supplying these also.

Never strive for literary style. There won't be room to print it. You may be able to write

much more colorfully, much more graphically, much more interestingly than anyone on the publication you intend to honor, yet the editor would be entirely justified in ordering your effusion done over by a cub reporter just out of high school if it violated the peculiar rules editors have been obliged to formulate for the writing of news.

When you compose, keep in mind the following questions about your subject: *Who? What? How? When? Where? Why?*

Whom are you writing about?

What did he do, or what happened to him?

How did he do it?

When did he do it?

Where did all this take place?

Why was it done?

You should answer all these questions in your lead, in the order of their importance. Sometimes one or more of them will be so unimportant as not to require mention, but it

is always necessary to check them over and make sure.

Construction of the lead of a news story is a matter that requires much pains even from experienced newspapermen, and which drives the novice almost frantic. It is proposed here to show how a lead might be built for the same bit of news under various conditions, putting to the fore the "who, what, how, when, where, why" features consecutively as circumstances require.

It is not asserted that the following examples represent the best handling that could be given to the news specimen treated, or that they would be printed without revision in every newspaper office—no news lead is worth such a claim—but it is asserted that they are well handled and that they would be printed as they are by ninety per cent of newspapers, and furthermore that news-matter written by laymen according to the principles set forth here will gain much more attention from editors

and stand a better chance of being printed than if thrown together in the haphazard fashion that characterizes the usual lay news effort.

Material to be made into a news article—A social is to be given by the Presbyterian church. Thursday night is the time set. Music, recitations and refreshments are on the program. Grogan's hall is the place. The proceeds will go toward a new organ.

The following lead displays the *who?* feature first and most prominently, but note how the other questions are answered:—

"(*Who?*) Members of the Presbyterian church (*what?*) will hold a social (*when?*) next Thursday night (*where?*) in Grogan's hall (*how?*) with music, recitations and refreshments, (*why?*) to raise money for the purchase of a new organ."

(Now go on with the rest of the matter—Deacon Jones will sing "Asleep in the Deep," Fanny McPherson will play the violin—the

Rev. J. U. Howard will be in charge of the program, assisted by etc., etc., etc.)

Suppose, however, that the fact that a social is to be held is an event of great importance—due possibly to an epidemic which has prevented all public gatherings for some time—then the following would be appropriate:

"(*What?*) A social (*how?*) with music, recitations and refreshments will be held (*when?*) next Thursday night (*who?*) by members of the Presbyterian church (*where?*) in Grogan's hall (*why?*) to raise money for a new organ."

It may happen the music, recitations and refreshments are of such a character as to render them especially interesting. Observe:

"(*How?*) Selections by artists from the Chicago Grand Opera Company, dramatic readings by Arthur Canning, the tragedian, and bowls of the "Pershing Punch," devised in Paris by the chef of the Continental Hotel, will be features of the (*what?*) social to be

held (*when?*) next Thursday night (*where?*) in Grogan's hall by (*who?*) the Presbyterian church (*why?*) for the purpose of raising money toward the purchase of a new organ."

The time is very seldom the feature of a news story, and is so generally only when some dispute has arisen as to when an event took place or should take place, as in the following:

"(*When?*) Next Thursday night, not next Friday night as previously reported, is the time set for the (*what?*) holding of the social planned by (*who?*) the Presbyterian church (*why?*) to raise money for a new organ. The event (*where?*) will be in Grogan's hall (*how?*) and will be featured with a program of music, recitations and refreshments."

The *where* element is not the most important in the ordinary news story, but when it does overshadow everything else the yarn is generally a good one, susceptible of being featured. See:

"(*Where?*) Grogan's hall, where once the

dingy rafters echoed to ribald laughter from painted lips, where once the sleek-haired bartenders worked shift on shift past midnight in defiance of the closing laws, where once the sneak-thief and the safe-blower gathered to plan their depredations——

"Grogan's hall is to be the scene of a church social!

"It's true. (*Who?*) The Presbyterian church (*why?*) needs a new organ. (*What?*) Members of the amusement committee decided on a social to raise funds, but were unable to utilize the church building because of the repair work being done.

" 'Let's hold it in Grogan's hall,' suggested someone jokingly.

" 'Good idea,' declared Mrs. John J. Jenkins, committee chairman. "This church did more to close up Grogan's hall than any other agency in town; we'll go down there and celebrate our triumph.'

"And they're actually going to do it.

(*When?*) Thursday night is the time set, and (*how?*) there will be a big program of music and recitations, as well as refreshments. The public whether members of the church or not is invited to attend."

It will be readily seen that the foregoing examples of news leads can be adopted to the starting of any sort of story, whether it be a fire, a murder, an engagement, an elopement, the announcement of a candidacy, the opening of a new drugstore, or whatnot.

The lay writer is cautioned never to object when an editor has his contribution rewritten. Newspapers never rewrite submitted matter for the fun of it, and no one is more tiresome than the pest who bombards the office with contributions and then roars because they are not printed exactly as he turned them out. Judgment and opinion as to the literary merits of a given piece of writing will vary widely, but the editor is far more likely to be right than the contributor. Besides, he may have to order

the piece rewritten to (1) shorten it when space is tight, (2) lengthen it to fill space, (3) remove some statement which he thinks might make trouble if printed, (4) eliminate something which he knows to be incorrect, (5) insert some important feature the writer has omitted, (6) play up some feature in line with the policy of his paper to which the author has paid scant attention—and for about one hundred other reasons all weighty from an editorial standpoint, but which have nothing to do with the strictly literary merits of the writing under consideration.

Write on a typewriter, triple-spaced, if possible, if not, use a pen on unruled paper. Don't use a pencil unless absolutely necessary; it's too hard to read under an electric light, and a tired and cross editor is apt to give way to his grouch and throw the whole thing into the waste basket. Take pains to make big letters and to leave plenty of space for subheads, etc., between the lines.

If you have no typewriter, at least use typewriter-size paper. Don't use small sheets of notepaper; they get lost too easily and are too unhandy when it comes to writing directions for the printer on the story.

If you want the same item to go to several papers, get out a copy for each one. Don't ask one paper to see that the others get it. The first may refuse to supply its rivals with news, or it may promise to do so and then insure carefully that the information does not reach them.

Never ask to have your writing back, unless you have loaned a book, a valuable manuscript, or a record of some kind for reproduction. If the copy is valuable a newspaper will always take care of it and return it, but ordinary writing intended for publication is marked all over, smudged with directions for the printers in blue pencil, and cut up in small pieces to be set handily, and it is very bothersome to treat it otherwise.

11

Libel

Whoever deals frequently with the press should know something about libel, if for no other reason than to avoid making himself ridiculous in the fashion that frequently gives so much amusement to newspaper men.

No attempt will be made here to discuss the nice distinctions between libelous and non-libelous matter, as the line is sometimes so fine that lawyers must argue over it for days and judges ponder deeply. A few of the more obvious distinctions, however, will be taken up with the hope of setting the reader clear on some points not generally understood.

Different states have different libel laws, so that a person might be libeled in one state by printed matter that would not be libelous in

another. Local prejudices might also influence the court in one part of the country to award damages for matter which a court somewhere else would consider non-libelous. While the following statements will be found broadly true for all parts of the country, naturally exceptions to their accuracy will exist.

Broadly speaking, that printed matter is libelous which exposes one to hatred, contempt and ridicule, injures one's character, reputation or business, or the value of one's property. It is possible to libel a dead person's memory, and heirs have recovered damages for such injury. It is also possible to libel a criminal or depraved person by making him appear worse than he really is. This is difficult, though.

A libel is generally a falsehood, but not always. The truth, if told with malice that can be demonstrated, and to serve no cause that can be shown just, may be libelous. The old English law held that anything told in print which injured a person's reputation was libel-

ous—particularly if that person were a powerful noble or official. "The greater the truth, the greater the libel," ran the maxim.

From these statements it would seem easy to get damages against a newspaper, but it is not. At least, not large damages.

For one thing, if you feel injured by some piece of careless reporting you must prove the injury to the court. The burden of proof is on you, and cases of libel where this injury is definite and ponderable, while they do exist, are not frequent. If the paper has corrected its mistake, as sensibly managed papers do, such proof is even more difficult, and the possibility of imputing malice to the publication is largely removed.

In cases where the truth has been printed with malicious intent the burden of proving this malice is on the plaintiff, while the paper can always declare it printed the truth as a matter of public policy. Since the American public takes kindly to muckraking, it is usually

only necessary to show the truth of the printed matter to get an acquittal—regardless of the fine legal points.

It is usually necessary, also, to convince the court that you as plaintiff are not malicious in suing the paper, but are seeking redress for actual injury. If there has been bad blood for some time, this is hard. And for old enemies who have been mud-slinging at each other for years to engage in a libel suit is generally a waste of time. It is hard to convince a court the suit itself is not part of the mud-slinging.

There are also situations in which a newspaper may safely print matter that would otherwise be libelous. In the United States the press may publish speeches made in public, no matter how much the speaker abuses or slanders someone in his talk. In printing matter of this kind the press is of course a disseminator of libelous matter, but is nearly always absolved, especially if it can show it accepted the allega-

tions of the speaker in good faith without malice on its own part.

Newspapers may also print affidavits or letters introduced as evidence in court, or the testimony of witnesses, even tho all are demonstrably untrue and injurious to the character of someone. All this is called *privileged matter,* and it is practically impossible to get damages against a publication printing it, because it was delivered under oath and the newspaper can show it was accepted in good faith as the truth. Bills of complaint filed in court seem to be regarded likewise as privileged matter in some states, while in others any person injured by the printing of a bill of complaint before it has been ruled upon by the court may recover damages.

It has been said that the truth may be libelous if told maliciously. Nevertheless, proving the truth of one's statements nearly always clears the defendant in an American libel suit. It is hard to convince a jury in this country that the

"showing up" of anyone who can be shown up is not justified.

Technically, it is libelous to hound a man who has been guilty of a crime, but who has since reformed and is leading an upright life. Yet such a person would have considerable difficulty collecting damages for the persecution of some hostile paper. The publication would plead "public policy"—it felt bound to warn its readers against the ex-convict who had settled in their midst.

Likewise it would be technically libelous untruthfully to accuse a safe-blower of murder. But could a safe-blower's reputation be injured greatly by such a charge? No damages, then.

Newspapers big enough to injure one with their opposition are well supplied with legal talent skilled in libel fights. They are specialists in delaying and blocking. They also have an unpleasant habit of holding in reserve matter worse than they print in the first place and

introducing it at the trial when it can be safely printed.

Suing for damages over libelous matter is the least profitable of all enterprises, but if one has actual proof of a plot to injure, he can swear out a complaint for criminal libel and put the burden of prosecution on the state. The filing of criminal charges at least convinces the court the injured person is not trying to make any money out of the cases, and that strengthens the plaintiff's cause. Sentences imposed for criminal libel are usually short and for some reason carry no such stigma as attaches to other crimes, probably because the offending editor usually has a definite following at home who make a martyr of him. Sometimes he edits his paper from jail, since these sentences seldom carry hard labor provisions.

Ordinary mistakes in news stories—wrong initials, misspelled names, incorrect addresses, etc.—do not constitute libel, even if mortifying, unless they can be shown to have exposed the

aggrieved person to hatred, contempt and ridicule in such a degree that demonstrable injury results. A sensible paper that makes an error of this nature always hastens to correct it, and in such a case the cause for action against the publication is weakened, since any possibility of proving malice is removed.

Editors are often amused at the antics of indignant citizens who rush in, demanding retraction of something or other "in just as prominent a position as you printed this infamous lie, sir, and just as much space, too, or I'll have you in court."

Investigation of such a complaint usually reveals that a mistake has been made in reporting, or that the paper has taken someone's word for a statement which was not true. In such a case what more could be asked than to print the complainant's side of the story? When the editor displays a spirit of fairness and offers proof that there is no conspiracy to ruin back of the misstatement in print, what could

be more reasonable than to cool down and let the matter end with the correction? It is not hard to get a correction of error, but a genuine retraction of statement with acknowledgment that the paper was wrong is seldom made in the United States. Whenever it becomes necessary for the average editor to admit something he printed was not so, he "passes the buck," steps sidewise and does everything except shoulder the blame. Direct apologies in print such as are seen in British papers are almost unknown here, due to our more lenient libel laws. Only a few of our largest and most outstanding publications—the Chicago *Tribune,* for instance—seem sure enough of their position to admit it freely and apologize if they are wrong.

A few large papers have special departments, like the "Beg Your Pardon" heading of the Chicago *Tribune,* in which they correct errors in names, initials, addresses and lesser mistakes, and express regret at having made the

slips. It is noteworthy, though, that really big errors are not retracted here. They may be *corrected* elsewhere, but not *retracted.* Note the difference. Most newspapers fear to admit themselves in the wrong because they think their prestige with the public will be weakened. So they adopt as far as possible the attitude, "We are always right," and abase themselves only when compelled to avoid legal combat, and then frequently in an evasive manner.

This will explain why it is useless to demand a wholehearted and unqualified retraction, or a boot-licking apology. You may get a brief correction of error, a statement of your side of the matter, but that is all. And if you propose to get along with the newspapers, you would best be content with that.

A Michigan editor called Roosevelt a drunkard. Roosevelt sued, won, and got six cents damages. He asked for a small award, but it is doubtful if he could have had a large one

anyhow. Damages asked and damages granted are two different things.

Roosevelt called William G. Barnes a "boss." Such an epithet must have had more or less vindictiveness back of it, yet Barnes lost the suit he brought.

The Chicago *Tribune* called Henry Ford an anarchist, and he sued for $1,000,000. He won the case, but got six cents instead of the million.

Starting a libel suit is about the most barren enterprise one can undertake, and the man who hopes to succeed with the newspapers should practise this activity as seldom as possible.